

Prepared Remarks for SB 238 9/23/20

Chairman McColley, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Minority Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of Senate Bill 238, which establishes licensure for the practice of art and music therapy in the state of Ohio. My name is Cheryl Pete. I am a board certified art therapist, Clinical Director of the Art Therapy Studio in Cleveland and a member of the Buckeye Art Therapy Association.

Art and music therapy are unique mental health professions that require specialized training and are different from other mental health professions. Art therapists are required to have a master's degree and receive training in both psychology as well art therapy techniques and interventions. Art is used as a method of communication to help people translate and process experiences and emotions that they cannot find words for. In my practice, I have found art therapy incredibly effective in the work I have done with homeless veterans, people addressing opiate and other addiction, at risk youth and people with disabilities. Art therapy can help people gain a new understanding of themselves, better manage their emotions, promote social skills and support self-esteem.

As the mental health impact of the COVID19 pandemic continues to be studied, we understand that in addition to the anxiety and fear surrounding the virus itself, the public health measures necessary to prevent the spread of the virus can have a mental health impact. Projected mental health outcomes and related conditions include depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Since April of this year, the Art Therapy Studio has been providing distance Art Therapy as a means to cope with social isolation and other pandemic related stressors. Clients have reported the art therapy programming has helped to decrease their anxiety, maintain social connections and promote self-care.

Art and music therapy are uniquely positioned to address crisis and trauma as they are highly sensory approaches that target areas of the brain impacted by these experiences. Further, art and music therapies teach coping skills that can be utilized outside of the therapy session.

Senate Bill 238 will increase the standard of care for the public by ensuring art therapy is only provided by appropriately trained professionals. Without the proper training, a person has the potential to cause harm by misinterpreting artwork, using art media inappropriate for the clients needs or using art interventions that can increase client distress.

Licensure for art and music therapists will also increase client access to services, expanding services to people that cannot access therapy services outside of insurance coverage. The state of Ohio will have a clear means of regulating art therapists, improving the standards of practice and health care policy.

Further, licensure will increase job opportunities for art therapists in Ohio, and provide sustainability for the profession. SB 238 will also allow for more a higher standard of training for art therapists in Ohio as the need for a dual counseling degree will be eliminated, allowing educational institutions to provide increased training in art therapy techniques.

I thank the committee for your time and consideration and am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Cheryl Pete, ATR-BC